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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Organizational session for 1992

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Organization of work for 1992-1993.

4. Programme of work for 1992.

5. Other business.

ANNOTATIONS

1. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees:

> "... shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence."

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational meeting for 1989, held on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that henceforth the Chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Organization of work for 1992-1993

At its 305th meeting, on 9 February 1990, 1/ the Committee decided to adopt a biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating to documentation in even years, and those relating to meetings in odd years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

At its 326th meeting, on 6 March 1991, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1991 and requested the Secretariat to present a draft provisional agenda for 1992-1993 to the Committee at its organizational meeting in 1992.

At its 331st meeting, on 20 August 1991, the Committee on Conferences adopted guidelines for the Committee's consideration of and action on inter-sessional departures. In organizing its work and in keeping with those guidelines, the Committee may wish:

(a) To meet as required to consider proposed inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar that require explicit authorization of the Committee;

(b) To conduct as much business as possible in informal consultations in order to curtail the number of official meetings, in particular by entrusting certain tasks to its Bureau.

Further meetings may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which the proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made during sessions of the Assembly shall be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 1992

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988. As noted above, the Secretariat was requested to present a draft provisional agenda for 1992-1993 to the Committee at its organizational meeting in 1992.

Annexed to the present document is a draft agenda for the biennium, followed by a draft annotated agenda for 1992, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly. The Committee may also wish to determine the timing and duration of its 1992 substantive session and to specify the documentation requirements.

5. Other business

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/45/32).

Annex

Draft agenda 1992

1. Adoption of the agenda.

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

   (a) Adoption of draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1993;

   (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources: meeting statistics of United Nations organs;

   (c) Improved organization of work and effective use of conference resources:

      (i) Possibility of coordinated planning of all organizational aspects of conference servicing;

      (ii) Measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources;

   (d) Requests for exceptions to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 40/243.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

   (a) Communications from Member States circulated as documents of the United Nations;

   (b) Reports of subsidiary organs to the General Assembly: compliance with the desirable 32-page limit;

   (c) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly;

   (d) Implementation of the rules and regulations on control and limitation of documentation: compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of pre-session documentation.

4. United Nations publications policy: implementation of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, paragraph 4 (h).

5. Review of the Department of Conference Services:

   (a) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/190;

   (b) Review of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997: conference and library services.

6. Organization of work of the Committee on Conferences:

   (a) Review of meeting requirements, implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/190;

   (b) Biennialization of the agenda item entitled "Pattern of conferences".

7. Other business.

8. Adoption of the report.

Draft agenda 1993

1. Adoption of the agenda.

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

   (a) Adoption of draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 1994-1995;

   (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources: meeting statistics of United Nations organs;

   (c) Improved organization of work and effective use of conference resources:

      (i) Existing conference resources, services and facilities within the United Nations;

      (ii) Possibility of coordinated planning of all organizational aspects of conference servicing;

      (iii) Measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources;

   (d) Consideration of the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 1994-1995;

   (e) Requests for exceptions to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 40/243.

3. Improved coordination of conferences within the United Nations system: implementation of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, paragraph 4 (f).

4. Meetings of organs and programmes not funded from the regular budget of the United Nations.

5. Application of new technology to conference servicing.

6. Review of the Department of Conference Services:

   (a) Review of the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1990-1991;

   (b) Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995: Section 32, Conference and library services;

   (c) Review of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997: Conference and library services.

7. Other business.

8. Adoption of the report.

Annotations for the 1992 substantive session

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

   (a) Adoption of draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1993

In line with past practice, the Committee on Conferences will submit to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1993. In view of the comments made by delegations during the discussion of the draft calendar for 1992-1993, the Secretariat will issue the draft revised calendar for 1993 as early as possible.

In paragraph 3 of resolution 46/190, the General Assembly called upon the Committee on Conferences and the Secretariat to analyse alternative scheduling arrangements for the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and the ramifications of possible adjustments to the dates as currently scheduled for 1993. If the Committee so decides, the Secretariat would provide an oral report on this matter for consideration at the substantive session.

In paragraph 18 of resolution 46/190, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session and as appropriate at subsequent sessions, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a consolidated statement relating to the number and costs of scheduled special conferences bearing in mind the annual limit of five as set out in resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 and endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986". The requested report will be submitted to the Committee at its substantive session.

In accordance with the biennial programme of work, and pursuant to paragraph 19 of resolution 46/190, it is expected that the Committee on Conferences will consider the overall topic of meetings provided to organs and programmes not funded from the regular budget and the impact of their scheduling on the calendar of conferences in 1993. At the same time, in paragraph 20 of resolution 46/190, the General Assembly invited "the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund to review their meeting and documentation requirements in the light of their significant financial implications and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, through the Committee on Conferences". The information received from the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund will be available to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session in 1992.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources: meeting statistics of United Nations organs

Pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 44/196 of 21 December 1989, the Committee on Conferences agreed to put into experimental use a newly proposed methodology to run parallel with the existing methodology for three years commencing in 1990.

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 46/190, the Assembly welcomed the decision of the Committee on Conferences to incorporate an availability index on pre-session documentation into the experimental methodology, and requested the Committee, in continuing its analysis of the experimental methodology, to consider additional elements proposed in the Fifth Committee, including a review of the benchmark figure up to 85 per cent and the separate presentation of time lost due to late starting and early ending of meetings.

The Committee has studied a series of reports since 1983 showing the meetings statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. In view of the decisions of the Committee, and the above-cited request of the General Assembly, the Secretariat will submit two written reports on meetings statistics: one compiled in accordance with the existing methodology and one using the new methodology.

In paragraph 13 of its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly requested the "Committee on Conferences, in consultation with the organs concerned, to examine the cases where the utilization factor is lower than the established benchmark figure for at least three sessions, with a view to reporting on problems and factors that have given rise to such a situation, and to make appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources". Replies to the Chairman's letters to the organs concerned will be circulated as a document of the Committee for consideration at its 1992 session.

(c) Improved organization of work and effective use of conference resources

(i) Possibility of coordinated planning of all organizational aspects of conference servicing

In paragraph 8 of its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly requested "the Committee on Conferences to examine, in the light of the approved calendars of conferences and meetings, particularly that for 1992-1993, trends in meetings and documentation requirements as well as the related workload of the Secretariat, on the basis of the relevant statistics and projections covering the period from 1984 to 1993 to be submitted by the Secretary-General, and to report its findings to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session".

In paragraph 17 of the same resolution 46/190, the General Assembly invited the Committee on Conferences, in close consultation with the Secretariat, and taking into account views expressed in the Fifth Committee,

to strengthen its efforts in the coordinated planning of conference-servicing resources, including an examination of the current situation, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

In view of the interrelated nature of the above-cited requests pertaining to the earliest stages of planning conferences and meetings, the Committee may wish to consider the two reports requested under this agenda item.

(ii) Measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources

In paragraph 8 of resolution 45/238 A, and subsequently in paragraph 10 of resolution 46/190, the General Assembly called upon the Committee on Conferences to consider, within its mandate, measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources. At its 331st meeting, on 20 August 1991, a/ the Committee on Conferences considered a conference room paper from the Secretariat detailing the experience gained from measures taken and results achieved to date in each of the main aspects of conference-servicing work. The Committee took note of the report provided by the Secretariat and decided that the Secretariat should update and monitor the efforts under way with respect to implementation of the measures recommended by the Committee on Conferences and adopted by the General Assembly with a view to reporting further to the Committee on the results achieved.

In paragraph 9 of its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly requested the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences and the Secretary-General to maintain their contacts with United Nations organs, bringing to their attention ways to ensure the most efficient and effective use of conference services allocated to those organs.

In paragraphs 11 and 12 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested all subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council to undertake informal consultations on a regular basis for the purpose of improving the utilization of their conference-servicing resources, requested the chairmen of these bodies to report the results of these consultations to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive analysis of replies received to the Committee on Conferences.

In view of earlier decisions of the Committee, and the above-cited request of the General Assembly, replies to the Chairman's letter will be circulated as a document of the Committee on Conferences, and the Secretariat will present a written analysis of information provided following the reviews by subsidiary organs.

(d) Requests for exceptions to paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 40/243

By section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, the General Assembly decided that "no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly".

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session, chairmen of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly wishing to meet at Headquarters during regular sessions of the General Assembly submit their requests to the Chairman of the Committee. Requests so received would be considered by the Committee on the basis of a conference room paper.

3. Control and limitation of documentation

(a) Communications from Member States circulated as documents of the United Nations

In paragraphs 4 and 5 of its resolution 45/238 B of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences, renewed its appeal to Member States to exercise restraint in their requests for the circulation of communications as United Nations documents and to keep their submissions as brief as possible, and its appeal to Member States and organizations of the United Nations system to respond in a timely manner to requests for information for inclusion in documents.

At its 312th and 313th meetings, on 20 and 21 August 1990, the Committee reviewed a report on communications from Member States circulated as documents of the United Nations (A/AC.172/142/Rev.1) and agreed that it would keep the matter under review, and would report further to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. If the Committee so decides, therefore, the Secretariat would prepare a report on this matter for consideration at the substantive session.

(b) Reports of subsidiary organs to the General Assembly: compliance with the desirable 32-page limit

At its 312th meeting, on 20 August 1990, the Committee reviewed the matter of compliance with the desirable 32-page limit on the basis of a report from the Secretariat (A/AC.172/139), and decided to remain seized of the matter, with a view to reporting to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. b/

At the same meeting, the Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare a study with input received from substantive secretariats of subsidiary bodies that would, inter alia, evaluate the question of establishing a page limit for reports of subsidiary organs to the General Assembly. If the Committee so decides, therefore, the Secretariat would submit a written report on the matter for consideration at the 1992 substantive session.

(c) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

At its 312th meeting, on 20 August 1990, c/ the Committee on Conferences decided to monitor the provision of summary records on a regular basis. Subsequently, in its resolution 45/238 B, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to continue to review the question of the provision of summary records on a regular basis and to report thereon to the General Assembly as appropriate. As with sub-item (a) under the general heading of "Control and limitation of documentation", the Committee may wish to consider this matter at its 1992 substantive session, on the basis of a report to be submitted at that time, with a view to reporting to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

Under the agenda item, the Secretariat will also submit a written report on proposed adjustments in the issuance of verbatim records.

(d) Implementation of the rules and regulations on control and limitation of documentation: compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of pre-session documentation

At its 320th and 321st meetings, on 24 and 27 August 1990, the Committee considered a review of the implementation of rules and regulations relating to control and limitation of documentation, with special emphasis on Secretariat compliance with the six-week rule. The Committee took note of the report contained in document A/AC.172/141, and reaffirmed the need for the Secretariat to comply with the six-week rule with regard to the availability of documentation. d/

In a related matter, at its 1991 substantive session, under agenda items on measures to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the use of conference-servicing resources, and the application of new technologies to conference servicing, the Committee advised the Secretariat to take account of proposals on documentation when preparing future reports for the Committee's consideration in 1992 on items related to documentation, including the establishment and enforcement of restrictions on the length of reports prepared by the Secretariat, and the extent to which new technology assisted in compliance with the six-week rule for issuance of pre-session documentation. e/ If the Committee so decides, therefore, the Secretariat will provide a written report on these aspects of Secretariat compliance with the rules and regulations on control and limitation of documentation to the 1992 substantive session.

4. United Nations publications policy: implementation of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B, paragraph 4 (h)

In paragraph 4 (h) of its resoluton 43/222 B, the General Assembly decided, inter alia, that the Committee should "monitor the policy of the Organization on publications, with the assistance of the Publications Board of the Secretariat and taking into account positions adopted by the Committee on Information and other relevant bodies".

At its 320th and 321st meetings, on 24 and 27 August 1990, the Committee took note of a report of the Secretary-General on publications policies of the United Nations (A/AC.172/138), and decided to remain seized of the matter. At the same meetings, the Committee noted that it was awaiting the development of the new methodology being prepared by the Secretariat which would permit an analysis of the costs of recurrent publications, and requested an evaluation of the readership of recurrent publications. f/

Subsequently, in section VI of resolution 46/185 B, the General Assembly noted that "there seems to be a large number of publications and an unclear distinction between publications requested by intergovernmental bodies and technical publications produced at the initiative of the Secretariat"; "that the quality and relevance of publications appears to be uneven and that the policies for pricing and distribution of United Nations publications needs to be further refined"; endorsed "the recommendations contained in paragraphs 27 and 32.16 to 32.19 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions", and emphasized "the need for the Secretariat to utilize better internal printing facilities with a view to reducing the overall cost of printing"; and requested "the Secretary-General to review the overall publications policy of the Organization, including its technical aspects and possible coordination at the level of the system, and to present a report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session".

In view of the Committee's mandate as cited above, and taking into account the earlier decisions of the Committee, the Committee may wish to review a preliminary report at its substantive session in 1992, with a view to returning to the matter in 1993, prior to the submission of the Secretary-General's report as requested to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

5. Review of the Department of Conference Services

(a) Implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/190

In paragraph 10 of its resolution 44/196 A of 21 December 1989, the General Assembly took note of the intention of the Committee on Conferences to play a role in the review of the Department of Conference Services envisaged by the Secretary-General, on the understanding that the role would be in full accordance with its mandate and in conformity with resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988. At its 328th meeting, on 19 August 1991, the Committee on Conferences, on the recommendation of its Bureau, decided to consider and report jointly on the review of the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1988-1989: Department of Conference Services, review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993: section 32, Conference and library services, and the role of the Committee on Conferences in the review of the Department of Conference Services. g/

Pursuant to that decision, the Committee on Conferences reviewed the items at its 329th and 330th meetings, on 19 and 20 August 1991, and requested the Department of Conference Services, in cooperation with the Bureau of the Committee, to consider the issues requiring review, including the terms of reference and time-scale of the review, and report accordingly to the Committee at its 1992 substantive session.

Subsequently, in its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly recalled the Secretary-General's proposal at the forty-fourth session of the Assembly to undertake a fresh outside look at the Department of Conference Services during the biennium 1990-1991 as well as the relevant decisions of the Assembly in this regard, and requested the Secretary-General to review the organizational structure, technological innovations and working methods of the Department of Conference Services, and to report his recommendations to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

In view of the earlier decisions of the Committee, the Secretariat would present the terms of reference and time-scale of the review to the Bureau of the Committee with a view to providing the Secretary-General's report to the Committee at its substantive session.

(b) Review of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997: conference and library services

At its 321st meeting, on 27 August 1990, the Committee on Conferences, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/219, reviewed, and recommended to the General Assembly that it approve the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, major programme IX, Conference Services, programme 39, Conference and library services, as contained in document A/45/36 (Prog. 39). The Committee may wish to consider proposed revisions to that plan at its 1992 substantive session.

6. Organization of work of the Committee on Conferences

(a) Review of meeting requirements, implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/190

As mentioned above, in paragraphs 11 and 12 of resolution 46/190, the Assembly requested all subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council to undertake informal consultations on a regular basis for the purpose of improving the utilization of their conference-servicing resources. The Committee may wish to meet informally during 1992 to undertake the review requested, and, in order to assist the Committee, the Secretariat would provide an oral report detailing the utilization pattern of the Committee on Conferences.

(b) Biennialization of the agenda item entitled "Pattern of conferences"

In its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly took note of the comprehensive programme of work and biennialization of work programme adopted by the Committee on Conferences, and called upon the Committee to continue to explore ways and means for a more effective implementation of its terms of reference and the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213.

In paragraph 29 of the same resolution, the General Assembly decided "to consider at its forty-seventh session the desirability and possibility of biennializing this agenda item (Pattern of conferences) in the context of the ongoing efforts to improve the work of the Fifth Committee by, inter alia, biennializing items of its agenda.

In order to assist the Committee in complying with the requests of the Assembly as cited above, and in providing input into discussions on biennialization of the agenda item on pattern of conferences, the Secretariat will submit a written report on possible reorganization of the Committee's programme of work for its consideration.

7. Other business

In its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to make proposals to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, on the usefulness and feasibility of installing an appropriate signalling system whenever any speech time-limit is established in accordance with rule 72 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, to enable systematically each speaker, as well as the Chairperson and participants, to monitor the time left before actually breaking the time-limit.

In view of the Committee's interest in the subject-matter, the Committee may wish to examine a draft of the Secretary-General's report to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

8. Adoption of the report

Notes

a/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/46/32), paras. 45-51.

b/ Ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/45/32), paras. 65-67.

c/ Ibid., paras. 76-78.

Notes (continued)

d/ Ibid., paras. 86-96.

e/ Ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/46/32), paras. 45-55.

f/ Ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/45/32), chap. III.

g/ Ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/46/32), chap. V.